

Grumpy Badger's Christmas



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For Yvonne, who is never grumpy – P B

For Dylan – J C

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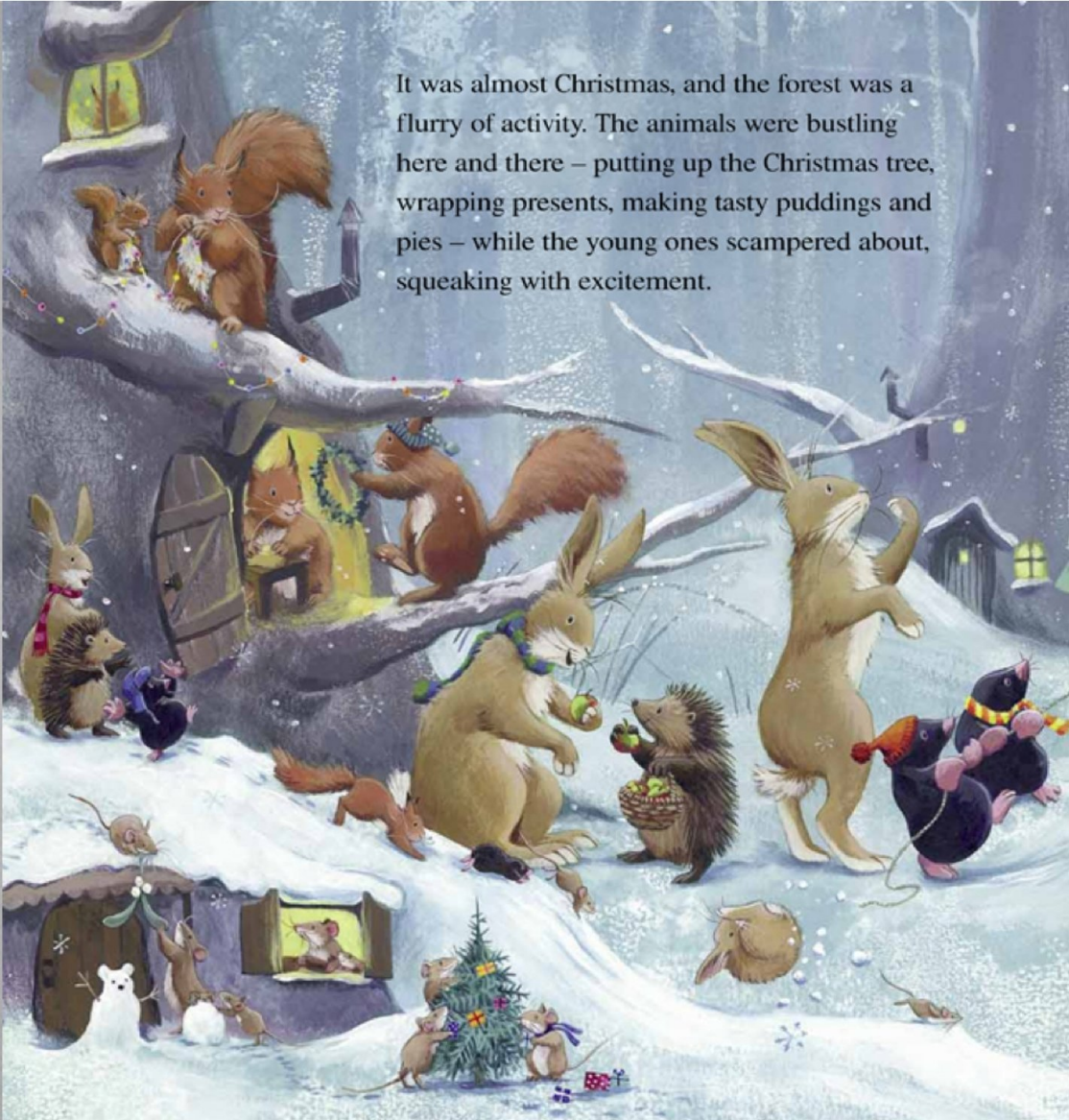
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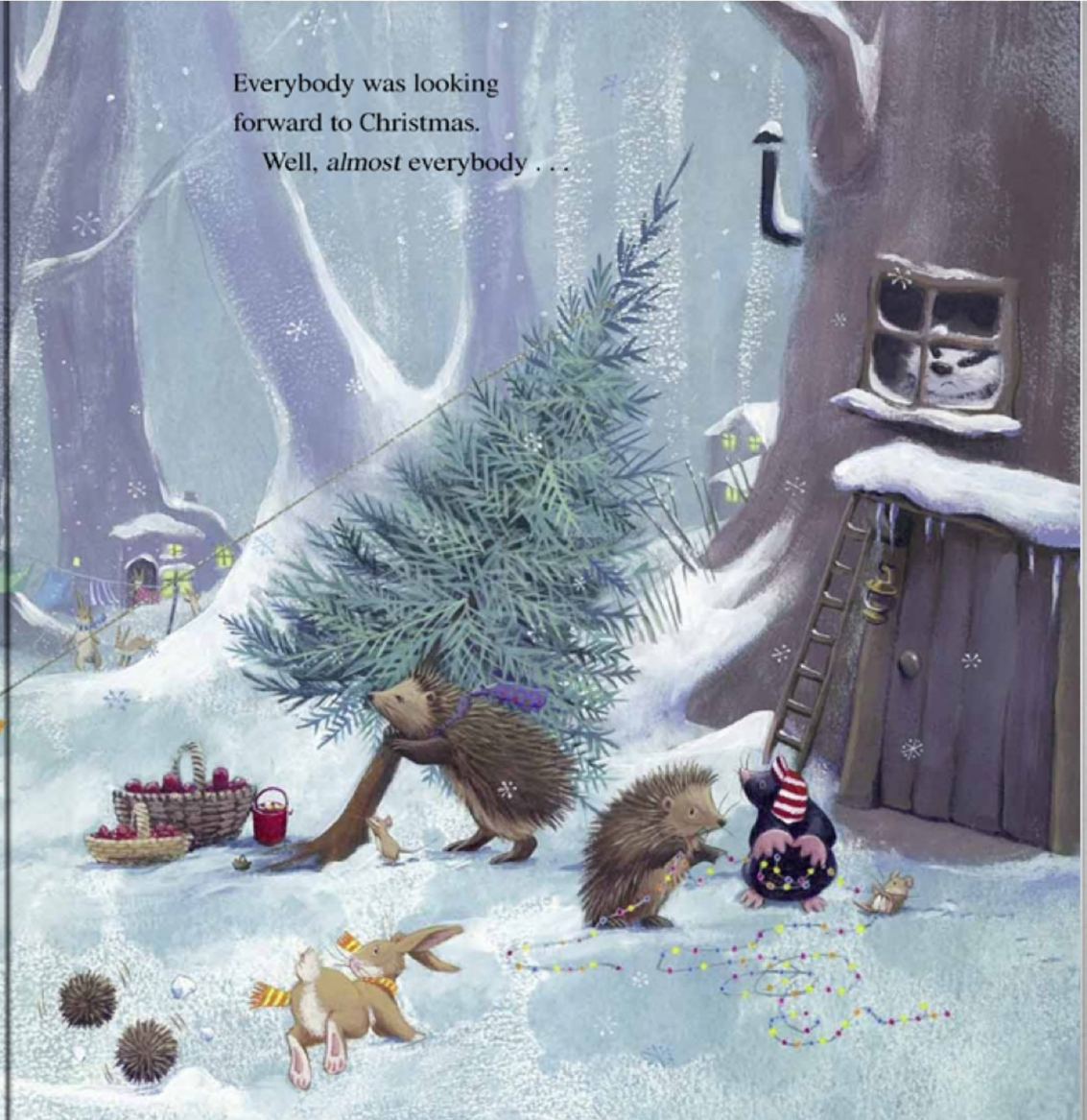
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It was almost Christmas, and the forest was a flurry of activity. The animals were bustling here and there – putting up the Christmas tree, wrapping presents, making tasty puddings and pies – while the young ones scampered about, squeaking with excitement.



Everybody was looking forward to Christmas.

Well, *almost* everybody . . .



Grumpy Badger looked out of his window
and scowled.

"Happy Christmas!" shouted Squirrel.

"Happy Christmas? Bah!" he shouted back.

"What piffle! I am a sensible creature
and I sleep all through the cold winter.



"Now I am going to bed
until the spring, and if
anyone wakes me I shall
be very, very grumpy!"

And with that, he pulled
his window shut with a

CLUNK!



Grumpy Badger knew he would be hungry when he woke, so he checked his larder. There were puddings, pickles and pastries, packets of hams and cheeses, crispy crackers, jars of fruit and sticky-sweet jams.

"That *should* do," he said.

Then he filled his hot water bottle and climbed into bed.

He had just closed his eyes when there was a knock at the door.

KNOCK!
KNOCK!
KNOCK!





It was Mole.

"H-h-happy Christmas, Mr Badger," he said, timidly. "I'm sorry to bother you. I've been trying to put lights on the Christmas tree, but it's just too big. Could I please borrow your ladder?"

"Christmas tree?" spluttered Grumpy Badger.
"Piffle and double piffle!"

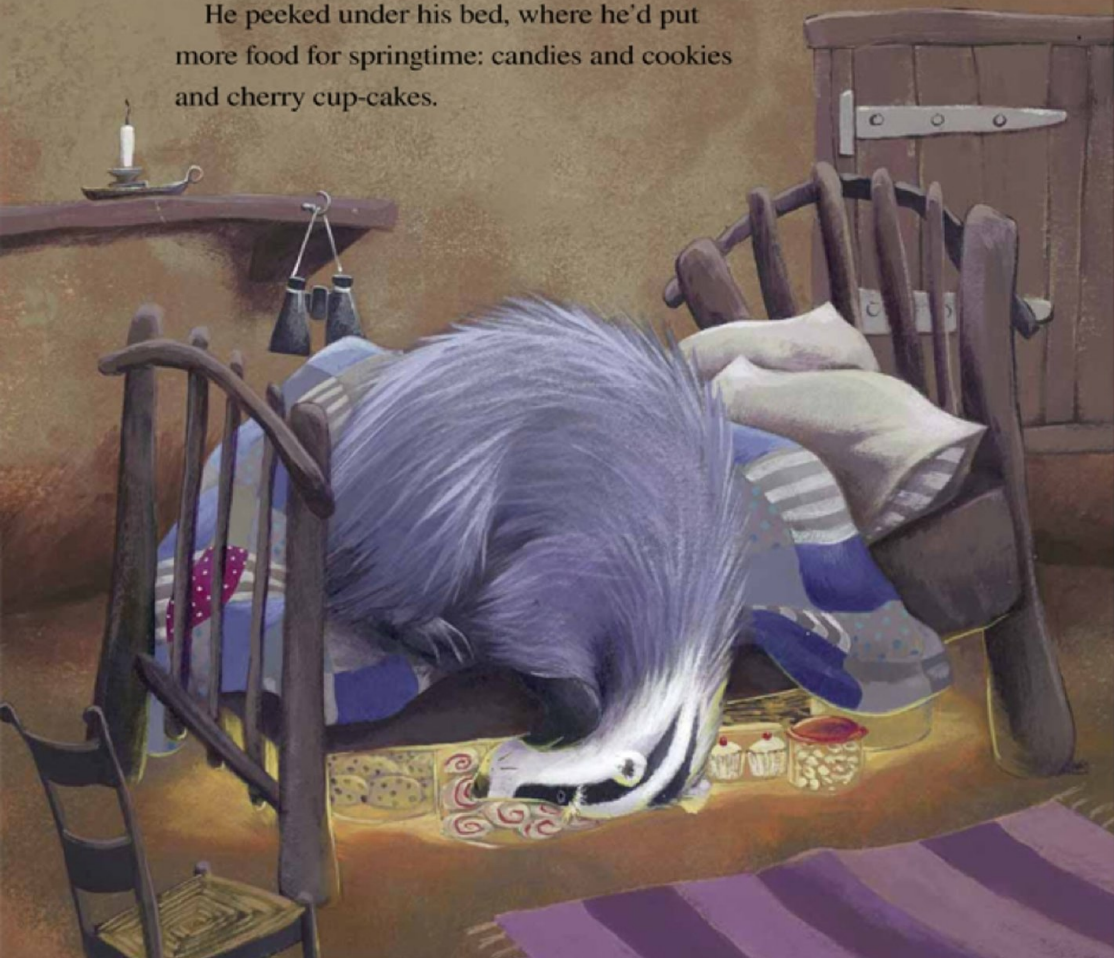
Christmas is for sleeping – and that's what I'm trying to do!" And he closed the door with a

BANG!



"Bah!" huffed Grumpy Badger, climbing into bed.
"Borrow my ladder indeed! All I want is a bit of
peace and quiet and leave-me-alone."

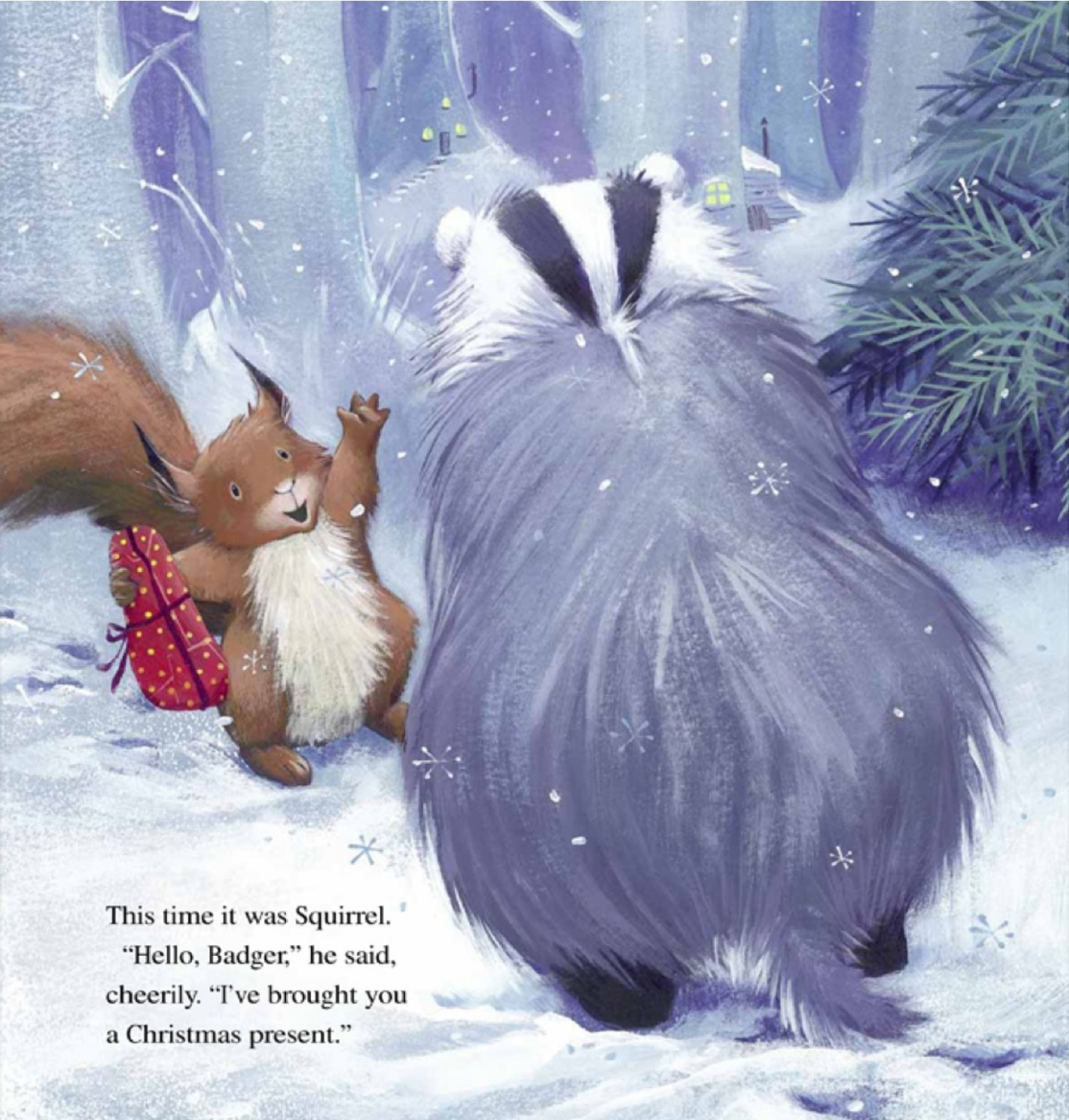
He peeked under his bed, where he'd put
more food for springtime: candies and cookies
and cherry cup-cakes.



Then he cuddled deep into his big,
warm eiderdown. He was just
starting to snore when there was
another knock at the door.

KNOCK!
KNOCK!
KNOCK!





This time it was Squirrel.
“Hello, Badger,” he said,
cheerily. “I’ve brought you
a Christmas present.”

“Christmas present?” snorted Grumpy Badger.
“Piffle and triple piffle!
I don’t like presents and I don’t like Christmas!
All I want is a little peace!” And he shut the
door with a **CRASH!**





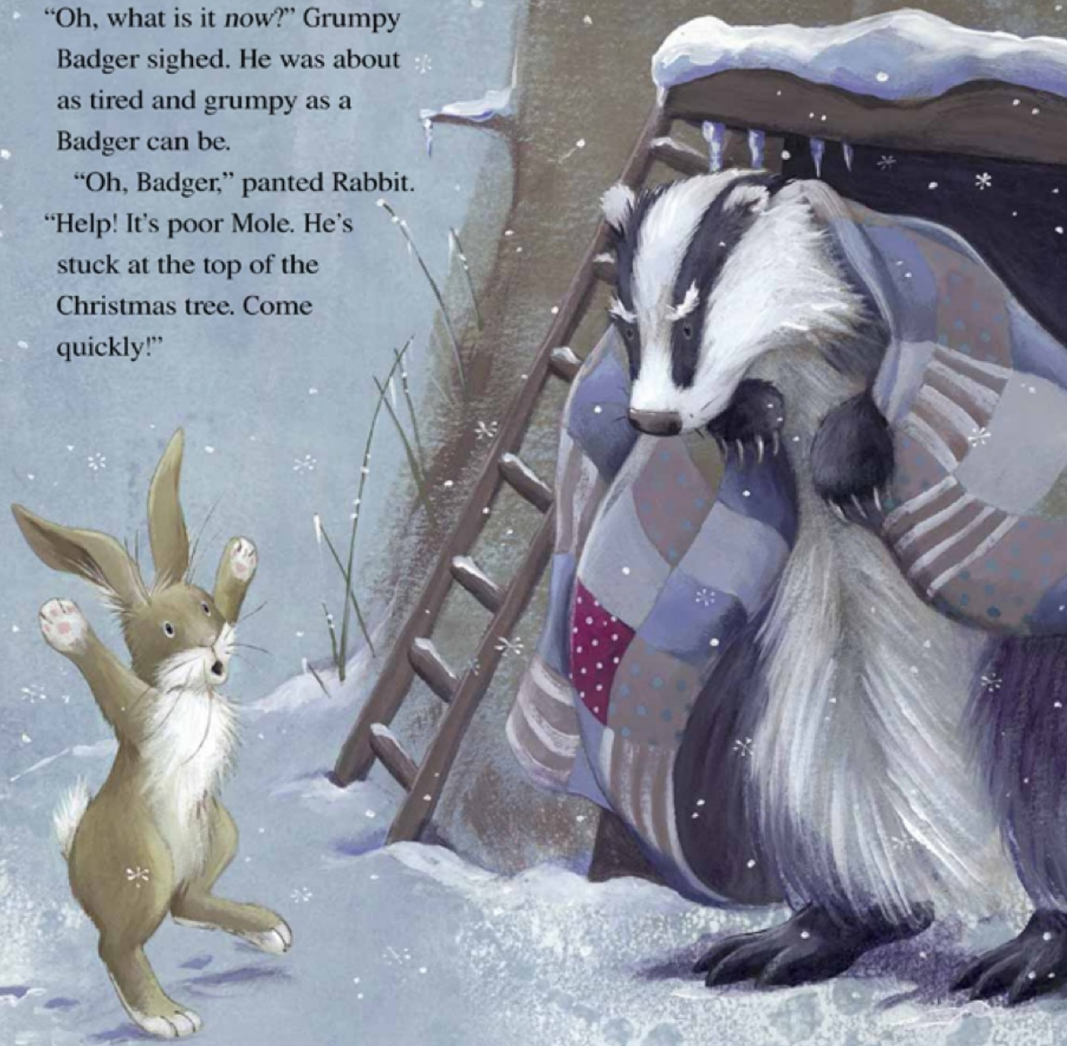
Now Grumpy Badger was really grumpy. To cheer himself up, he thought about the bottles and bottles of home-made lemonade he had in the cellar. Then he lay down and closed his eyes. But he couldn't sleep – his head felt a little chilly.

Suddenly there was a loud banging at the door.

BANG!
BANG!
BANG!

"Oh, what is it *now*?" Grumpy Badger sighed. He was about as tired and grumpy as a Badger can be.

"Oh, Badger," panted Rabbit. "Help! It's poor Mole. He's stuck at the top of the Christmas tree. Come quickly!"



"PIFFLE!" shouted Grumpy Badger.

"And triple piffle with knobs on!" Why can't everyone just leave me alone?" And he slammed the door so hard that the whole house shook!

SLAM!



At long last, Grumpy Badger fell asleep.

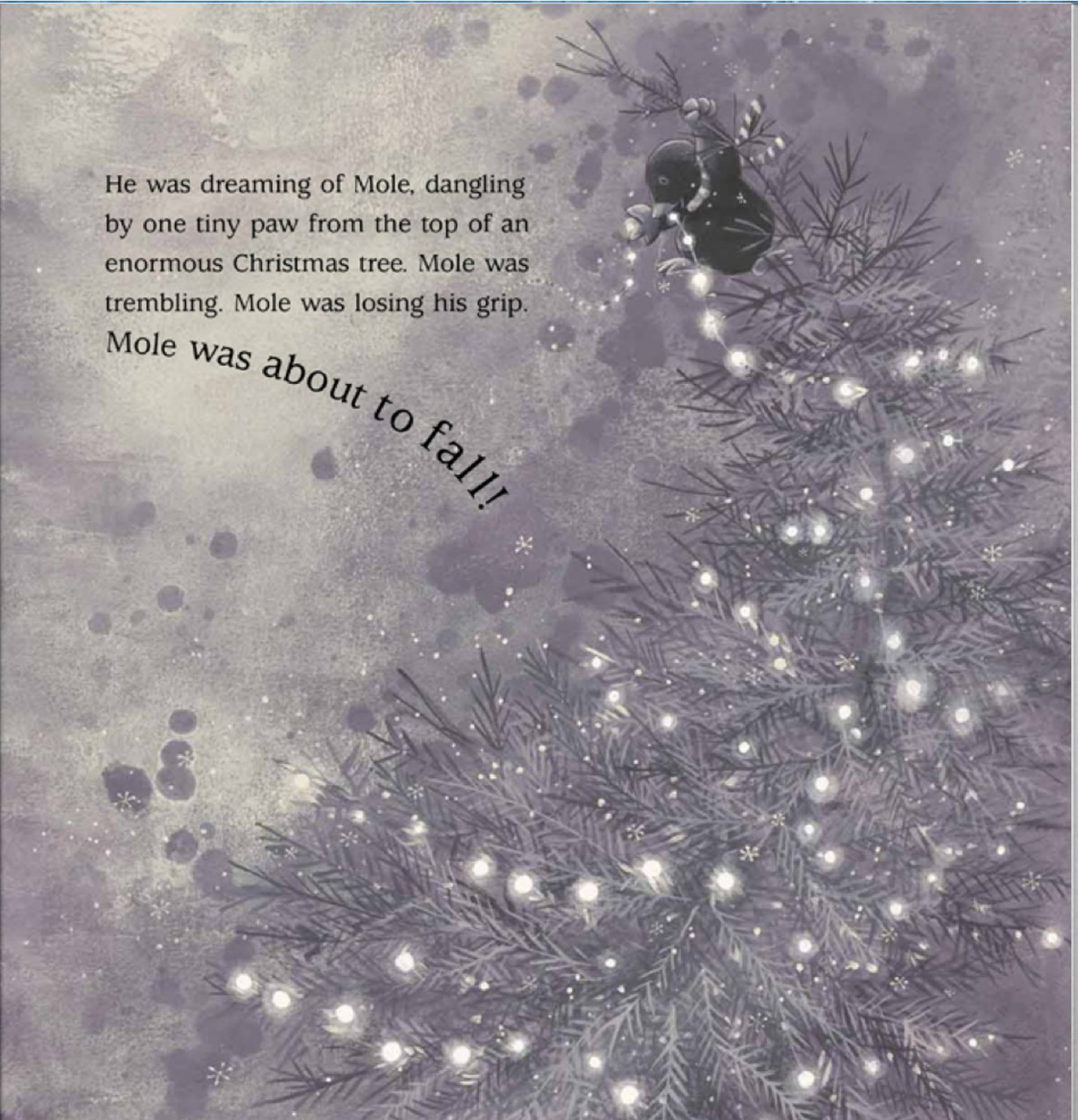
But soon he was tossing and turning
and wriggling and squirming.

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z
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He was dreaming of Mole, dangling
by one tiny paw from the top of an
enormous Christmas tree. Mole was
trembling. Mole was losing his grip.

Mole was about to fall!



“NOOOOOOO!”

screamed Grumpy Badger,
sitting bolt upright, and
suddenly wide awake.



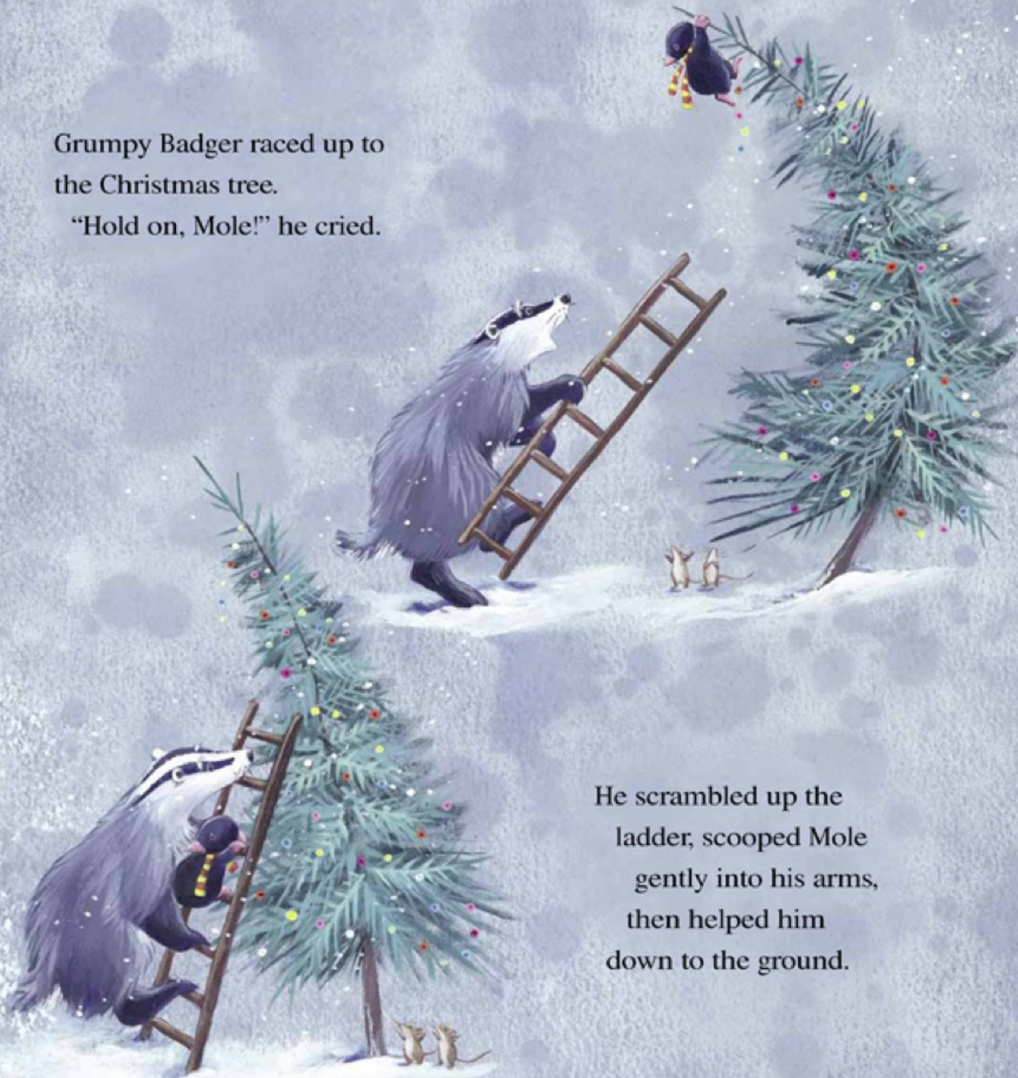
“What have I done?”

he yelled. He jumped out of bed, grabbed
his ladder and dashed into the street.

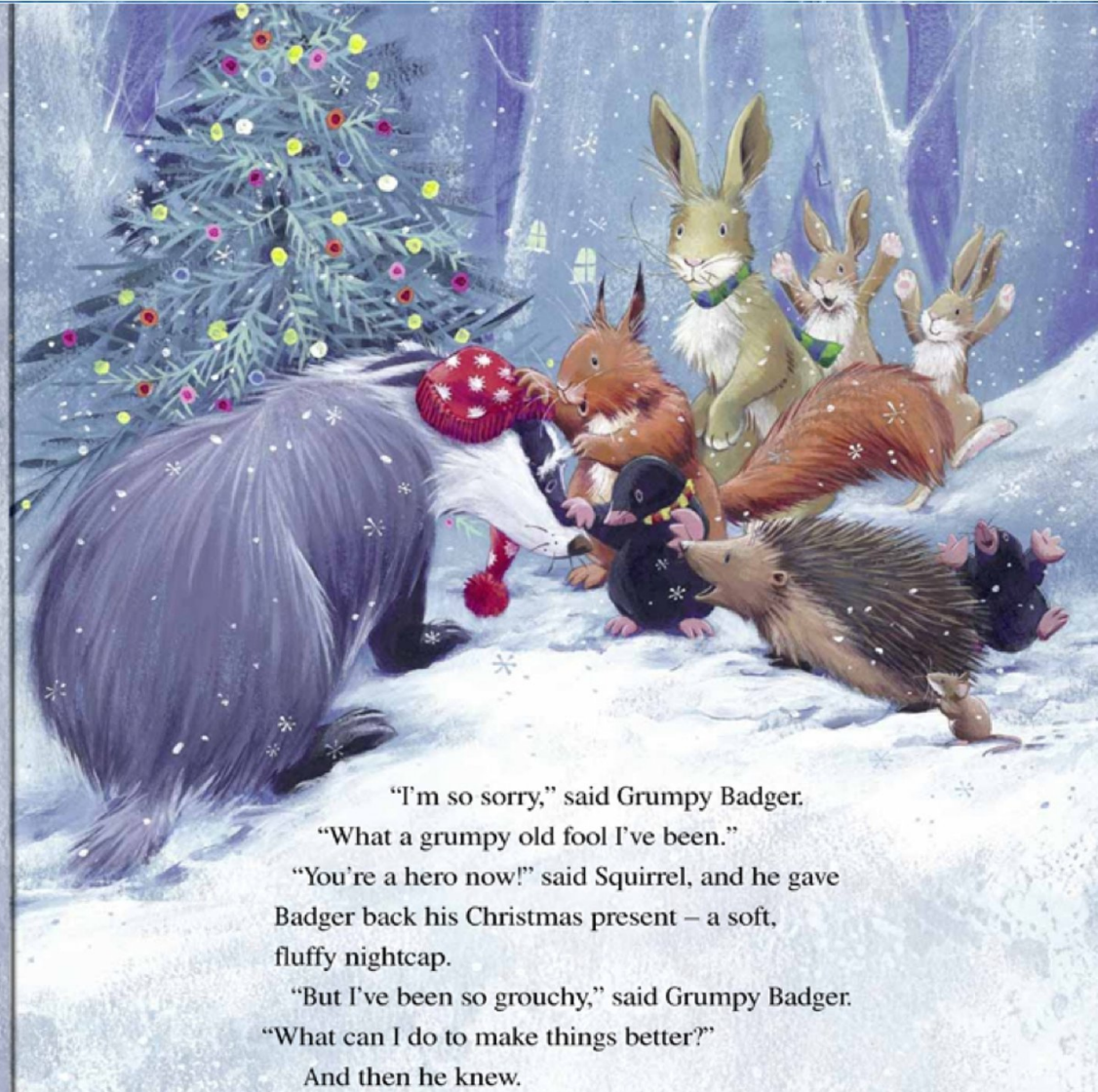


Grumpy Badger raced up to the Christmas tree.

"Hold on, Mole!" he cried.



He scrambled up the ladder, scooped Mole gently into his arms, then helped him down to the ground.



"I'm so sorry," said Grumpy Badger.

"What a grumpy old fool I've been."

"You're a hero now!" said Squirrel, and he gave Badger back his Christmas present – a soft, fluffy nightcap.

"But I've been so grouchy," said Grumpy Badger. "What can I do to make things better?"

And then he knew.

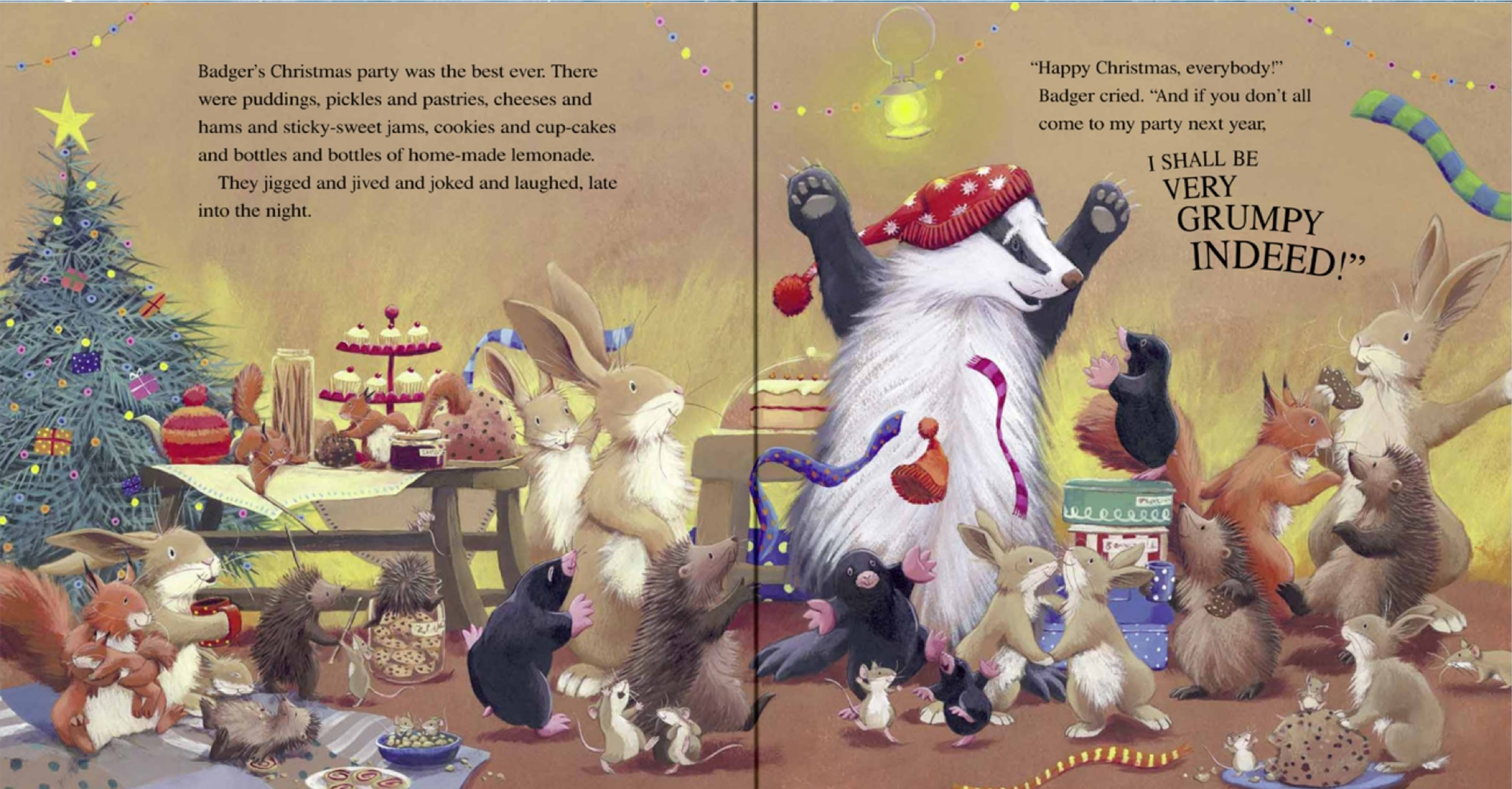
Badger's Christmas party was the best ever. There were puddings, pickles and pastries, cheeses and hams and sticky-sweet jams, cookies and cup-cakes and bottles and bottles of home-made lemonade.


They jigged and jived and joked and laughed, late into the night.

"Happy Christmas, everybody!"

Badger cried. "And if you don't all come to my party next year,

I SHALL BE
VERY
GRUMPY
INDEED!"





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